



Bringing Home the Word

Third Sunday of Lent (B)
March 7, 2021

Wisdom, Strength

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

The ceiling painting by Laureti, *The Triumph of Religion*, is found in the Constantine Room of the Vatican papal apartments. It is a symbolic celebration of the triumph of Christianity over paganism, set in a classical architectural space. The remains of a crushed Hermes lie broken in pieces on the floor, while a crucifix of Jesus Christ sits upon the pedestal.

It is fitting that this painting crowns the papal hall honoring Constantine, the first Roman emperor to leave paganism and be baptized a Christian. Constantine had four basilicas built in Rome—including St. Peter’s—and gave

Christians freedom of religion in the Roman Empire.

The message is clear. The Romans worshiped statues of gods who were mere human creations and projections. In the statue’s place is not just another statue but a crucifix that reminds us of a reality, a historical event. God himself became human in Jesus Christ and showed his divine strength by emptying himself and being crushed by our sins in order to forgive and win back a rebellious humanity.

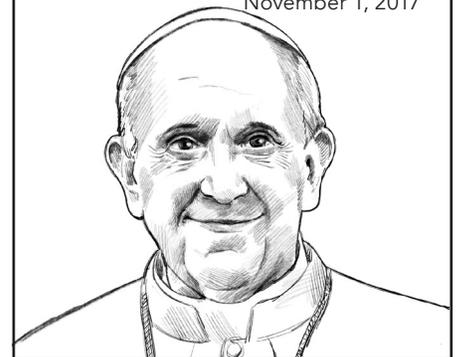
This show of godly power through weakness is foolishness to the Gentiles and inconceivable to the Jews. Yet this humility and love is the wisdom that confounds and the strength that saves.

Religion isn’t a business or human invention for personal enthronement. Jesus overturns this idea like he overturns the moneychangers’ tables. Worship of God is all about accepting his initiative and humbly responding in the obedience of faith and the purifying joy of love. +

A Word from Pope Francis

I urge the members of the Church to take up the Lenten journey with enthusiasm, sustained by almsgiving, fasting, and prayer. If, at times, the flame of charity seems to die in our own hearts, know that this is never the case in the heart of God! He constantly gives us a chance to begin loving anew.

—Lenten message for 2018, November 1, 2017



Sunday Readings

**Exodus 20:1–17 or
Exodus 20:1-3, 7–8, 12–17**

You shall not have other gods beside me.

1 Corinthians 1:22–25

Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified.

John 2:13–25

[Jesus said,] “Take these out of here, and stop making my Father’s house a marketplace.”

Religion isn’t a business or human invention for personal enthronement.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How does my faith foster humility in me?
- Are my Lenten practices helping me to be purified from sin?

God Behind the Scenes

By Kathleen M. Basi

Several times in the past few years, I've made major life shifts on the spur of the moment. For instance, starting a weight-loss program for myself, or potty training a toddler. One day, without any discussion or preparation, I said, "That's it, I'm doing this now." And I did.

As time passes, though, I'm beginning to realize that these seemingly abrupt direction changes aren't as sudden as they appear on the surface. Always, in the weeks or months before the turning point, there's an undercurrent of awareness buried deep down, where I'm not always cognizant of it. Quiet questions form in unguarded moments but go unanswered. Solutions whisper, but I resist. Around and around it goes, until the day when, without realizing it, I reach a fork in the road and—as Yogi Berra advised—take it.

Weight loss and toilet training may seem like trivial examples, but I think they illustrate a deeper truth. God is always working in the background, like a computer processor that whirs and whirs. You don't always know what it's doing. Actually, you hardly ever know what it's doing! But you understand it's doing something that keeps the whole system running, and when it needs your attention it's going to throw a pop-up in your face, and you'll be forced to respond.



Likewise, God will eventually punch through our distractions and nudge us in a new direction.

That's not to say we can just sit by complacently and wait for God to beat through the tangled web of busyness we build around our consciousness. It's our job to clear the roadblocks; to navigate the "undercurrent" until it melds into smoother waters. We have to nurture the spiritual life and be open to God's guidance—on his timeline, not ours. The most important insights and decisions in life cannot be rushed. God works through processes, and there just aren't any shortcuts.

Embrace these times, even when they make life uncomfortable. There's a purity of mind in discerning and pursuing new directions that automatically brings our focus toward God. In these moments, when we become aware of that deep, quiet current running beneath the clutter and static of life, we can feel—really feel and not just know—that God abides within us. And that is a great blessing. +

Often, seemingly abrupt decisions aren't as sudden as they appear.

PRAYER

Lord, you instill within me your power and wisdom. Help me to discern more clearly how to use your power and wisdom in service of my brothers and sisters.

—From *Mindful Meditations for Every Day of Lent and Easter*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

March 8–13

Monday, Lenten Weekday:
2 Kgs 5:1–15ab / Lk 4:24–30

Tuesday, Lenten Weekday:
Dn 3:25, 34–43 / Mt 18:21–35

Wednesday, Lenten Weekday:
Dt 4:1, 5–9 / Mt 5:17–19

Thursday, Lenten Weekday:
Jer 7:23–28 / Lk 11:14–23

Friday, Lenten Weekday:
Hos 14:2–10 / Mk 12:28–34

Saturday, Lenten Weekday:
Hos 6:1–6 / Lk 18:9–14

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